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ELABORATION OF B2B MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR KARAVA SAUNA LTD

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DESCRIPTION

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Abstract <p>The main objective of the research is to develop a preliminary marketing communications plan for Karava Sauna Ltd which is intending to expand to the Russian market. The case company considers such an expansion as a gainful opportunity since nowadays the Russian market is becoming increasingly profitable for many investors due to the rapid pace of GPA growth, relatively huge population and appropriate buying power.</p> <p>The theoretical part is divided into two sections which depict the major aspects of business-to-business marketing and operations. As for the practical part, there have been defined all the phases of the marketing communications plan namely current operational environment of the company, its prospective interest groups, the most effective marketing communications methods as well as recommended time scheduling. The outcome has met the stated objectives of the study and the preliminary marketing communications plan has been designed.</p> <p>The research is conducted using such a qualitative method as semi-structured interviews. Its objective is to obtain exceptional information and examine the respondents' perceptions and experiences concerning business-to-business marketing.</p> <p>Conclusions are presented as a summary with some concrete recommendations for Karava Sauna Ltd. This section became the visible part of the study because both preliminary marketing communications plan and suggestions for further development are provided.</p>		
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1 INTRODUCTION

Karava Sauna Ltd is a Finnish company which was founded in 1998. The company is a full-service provider of materials for sauna interiors whose customers are wholesale and construction companies, timber and hardware shops as well as private consumers. It is known that sauna evenings in Finland are very important for the whole nation and, as far as their closest neighbour is Russia, the traditions of the countries are pretty much the same. As a prospective market, Russia might both invest and profit from many kinds of business, consequently, Karava Sauna Ltd sees the expansion to the Russian market as a very lucrative opportunity.

The importance and relevance of this research may be certainly warranted by the fact that nowadays spending leisure time in saunas is extremely popular in Russia. The Russians, who are living in towns and cities, prefer to go to special places like spa, swimming-pools or relaxation centers rather than build a sauna inside the house. It happens due to the reason that the majority are living in the apartments as well as it is much harder and challenging to build a sauna than just to pay some money for something that was already built for them. Nevertheless, those people who are building or having cottages in the countryside, they prefer to have their own sauna either inside the cottage or in a separate house nearby. Consequently, the market can be divided into two categories: end-users and corporate clients.

The topic of the study is the development of b-to-b marketing communications plan. Thereon, the research questions of the case are the following: how is the buying process happening, what kind of companies constitute the target group, who exactly is responsible for the buyer decision in a buying organization, and which communication methods are the most effective for the selected target groups?

The study will discuss b-to-b markets, b-to-b marketing communications, organisational buying behaviour and the most suitable media channels for the commissioning party in accordance with its customers' behavior.

The research's objectives and outcomes are the following:

- propose a preliminary marketing communications plan
- prepare a list of the most effective marketing communications methods

- define potential target groups,
- clarify b2b buying behavior

There will be conducted five short telephone semi-structured interviews with the representatives of spa and relaxation centres located in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Such interviews will help to get some exceptional information like who is responsible for buying decision and what is the buying process like, who are their suppliers, the opportunities for cooperation with any international companies, etc. All the information will help the researcher to better understand the process of b-to-b collaboration in reality, the Russian business environment, the present market situation in the country, and the specifics of marketing.

2 BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETS

Speaking about business-to-business marketing and business-to-consumer marketing, it is important to point out that the approach which should be implied for each field is totally different. B-to-b markets' distinguishing element is that their customer is a company/organisation rather than an individual customer. Besides that, b-to-b markets are having the predominant amount of cash flow while none of the actions are visible for normal consumers. However, those consumers who are making buying decisions during their pastime are mostly coming from these or those companies and organisations. Therefore, the key feature which can describe the difference between b-to-b market and consumer-goods one is their buying process. (Bingham et al 2005, 75.)

Organisational buyer behaviour is totally different from a consumer buying one since the process of the latter behaviour is much more complicated and uncertain. In theory, organisational buyer behaviour consists of several stages which can be referred to any field of business. Therefore, it can be said that the organisational process is more logical, predictable and understandable. Normally the decision is made by a few individuals rather than by only one as organisational buying implicates the involvement of many stakeholders. When the decision is undertaken, the key characteristics of a product which are taken into consideration are the following: low-cost, expedient, beneficial as well as profitable. It is obvious that the price is not

playing the major role in this case because the derived benefits that exceed the real price are more important. Furthermore, the organisational buying process is more professional and systematic since there are not that many buyers. (Vitale & Giglierano 2002, 61.)

Additionally, it can be marked that there are certainly more differences which are coming for business and consumer marketing. In a nutshell, b-to-b marketing can be distinguished by bigger volume purchases, more precise distribution channels, several buying influences, composite negotiation, fewer buyers, outsized buyers and cooperation. (Bingham et al 2005, 15.)

Business goods which are bought or sold can be characterized by the following categories: installations, business services, raw materials, fabricated and component parts, accessory equipment, MRO (maintenance, repair and operating) supplies. (Bingham et al 2005, 11.)

2.1 Organizational buyer behaviour

Organisational buyer behaviour is dependent on numerous factors which are coming from both internal and external environment. In order to create a successful and cost-effective marketing strategy as well as to reach organisational buyers, it is imperative to understand the buyer's decision process. (Hutt & Speh 2010, 65.)

The decision-making process is a significant part of purchasing a product since it normally consists of a number of concerned activities rather than a single act. In business markets, the buying process comprises the consecutive activities (see Figure 1), (Brennan et al 2010, 37):

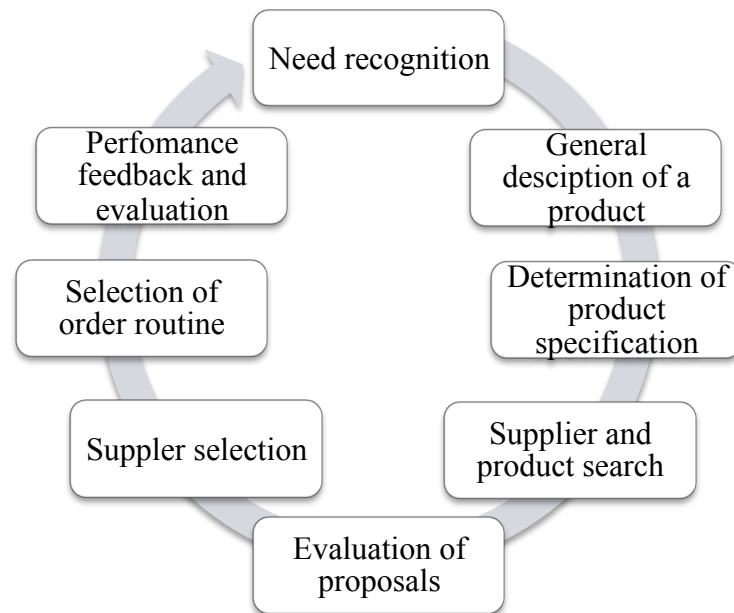


FIGURE 1. Organisational buying process – buygrid model (Adapted from Brennan et al 2010, 38)

The first stage starts when the need is recognised by someone in the company. It can be a simple employee, manager or even a stakeholder from inside or outside the organisation. In order to solve a certain problem, it is important to search for a concrete product. Besides that, the need can be also worked out by the improvement of the existing product. Once the need is found out, the company defines the exact description of a product. (Hutt & Speh 2010, 65.)

As soon as the product is indicated with all the company's requirements, they should search for all the possible suppliers which will meet their product need. It is quite important to be known among the buyers since a company's reputation is always playing a beneficial role in the case of supply. Moreover, a search for suppliers is a very time-consuming process which proves that if a buyer is aware of a certain organisation, it will find that company as a competitive supplier and will most likely go for cooperating with it. (Brennan et al 2010, 37.)

The evaluation of proposals will differ due to the complication and risk attached to the buying decision. During the evaluation process, there would be taken into account such issues as compliance with the supplier's proposal against the buying company's specification as well as the appraisal of the supplier organisation itself. Therefore,

evaluation can concern the specification of a product in line with the customer's wish to be engaged with potential suppliers. (Brennan et al 2010, 38.)

Regarding the selection process, it may be called as one of the most important ones since a company focuses on a solution which would be the best one for its needs. During the selection procedure, a company normally chooses an order routine and the most suitable supplier. In fact, there are two most suitable companies that are normally picked up while just after negotiations a company confirms which supplier is going to be preferred. Once the selection is made, a purchasing manager is becoming to be responsible for negotiating and assenting processes for an order delivery as well as a payment. (Anderson, Narus 2009, 23.)

The last but not the least step is performance feedback and evaluation. This phase can be divided into formal and informal. Speaking about the formal process of evaluation, it normally turns out that user departments fulfil a special form prepared beforehand by the purchasing team. The results are usually discussed during the meetings between the buyer and supplier. In turn, evaluation may be also informal so that both parties will share their opinions as a part of daily exchanges. (Hutt & Speh 2010, 78.)

The step-by-step process means a certain beginning and ending of each step as well as the notification that every phase has been completed. This is needed for starting the next step since all of them are highly connected to each other. (Anderson & Narus 2009, 45.)

2.2 Market segmentation

There are certain elements which are extremely important for making organisational decision-making namely choice, definition and description of the customer target groups. Target group segmentation is a foundation of implementation of other marketing coherent decisions. The realisation of intensive segmentation as well as the beneficial decision is a real precondition for other marketing solutions. Therefore, a strong affect on the successful realisation of segmentation is provoked by organisational buyer behaviour and the number of customers. (Fill 2005, 53.)

Market segmentation usually plays a foremost role in the strategic planning process since there are prospectively many alternate ways to group potential customers while some of them will render to more competitive advantage than others. (Bingham et al 2005, 179.)

The aim of target group segmentation is to come across the target audience which will suit best to the company's resources and facilitate the best commercial results. It is much advisable and profitable to concentrate just on uniform subgroups rather than on the whole market since in this case it is absolutely easier to reach the target audience and achieve the stated goals. When a company concentrates simply on the whole market, then the possibility of reaching the exact subgroup is quite low. Additionally, small enterprises should utilize such a concept because generally their resources are limited. (Fill 2005, 55.)

The market segmentation goes in line with customers' needs and wants, consequently, a company/organisation must be customer-centric so that it can meet their potential customers' expectations and hopes. However, in b-to-b markets, it is pretty hard to realize because the number of customers is a way smaller while it is hardly possible to recognise what are the needs and preferences of a certain company. (Powers & Sterling 2008, 76.)

In order to identify the right target audience, it is utterly important to follow some preconditions. For instance, all the subgroups have their own common values and characteristics which depict their consumer behaviour on belated stages. Obviously, the marketer's objective is to distinguish groups' needs in his/her best way because it will certainly contribute to further marketing strategies and decisions. The more precise the needs are, the easier it is to find the best approach, appropriate distribution channels and profitable pricing strategies. (Brennan et al 2010, 120.)

The evaluation of market segments may be defined by four elements. First of all, different segments, which were made out during research, should be measurable. It means that these segments should be investigated in line with all their needs which should be measured later on. Secondly, useful target segments should be substantial namely they should be that large so that a company/organisation can guarantee a particular treatment. Thirdly, it is imperative to focus on the segment's accessibility

because a company has to reach the segments via marketing communications as well as favour their needs and wants. The fourth element is responsiveness which means action. Target segments should be responsive to the improvement of various marketing mix elements. (Hutt & Speh 2010, 125.)

There are three different market-selection strategies which a company can choose when planning its marketing. The strategies are the following: undifferentiated marketing, differentiated marketing (selective marketing) and concentrated marketing. (Fill 2005, 98.)

Nevertheless, before only pointing out any of the strategies, it is significant to decide beforehand the reason of a certain choice. A company should keep in mind its resources, competitor's strategies, unit of products as well as the market, product life cycle. Besides that, there should be estimated the approximate amount of profit which a company is willing to receive eventually. Ultimately, when knowing all the factors mentioned above, marketers will be able to define the strategy which will be suitable also for other business operations. (Fill 2005, 99.)

Speaking about the undifferentiated marketing strategy, it can be said it is based on the concept of "market aggregation" which means that a company focuses on the market as a whole. This approach is concentrated on the common needs among buyers rather than on certain needs. Consequently, this strategy can be implied for those products which usage does not vary that much by a customer. For example, it can be gasoline or industrial greases. Moreover, it is useful for such spheres since this approach does not require a huge cost of marketing research and product management. (Bingham et al 2005, 182.)

As for differentiated marketing strategy, which can be also called a selective marketing one, it strives to recognize a product from competitive goods that are presented to the same aggregate market. By discriminating a product or a product line, a company marks out several potential target markets. Therefore, this approach is directed at meeting customers' needs in each segment. Big companies generally use this strategy because it demands plenty of resources. In a nutshell, the objective of this method is to reach a permanent position in each market segment. (Bingham et al 2005, 182.)

Regarding the concentrated marketing strategy, it means the selection of one or comparatively few segments on which to concentrate all its marketing efforts. Through concentrated marketing, companies gain a strong market position since their knowledge about segments' needs is quite extensive. The subsequent benefits can be the specialisation of production, effectiveness of resources allocation, delivery and promotion. This approach is pretty convenient for those enterprises which have limited resources since this method is cost-efficient. Moreover, they have more chances to succeed if they choose to attract smaller segments because the competition is little there. Despite the pluses of this approach, it can be still considered quite a risky one as there are some drawbacks that should be taken into consideration. For instance, the unpredicted competition which can significantly impact the current situation. Influential competitors may enter the same segment anytime by turning the segment's demand downward. (Bingham et al 2005, 183.)

When the companies have made a decision about their prospective target segments, they should choose the right strategy. During the process of segment's evaluation, companies need to remember the factors which they should take into consideration: structural affinity of segments, company's budget and its aims, segments' size and upgrowth, and the stability of market segments. (Bingham et al 2005, 185.)

2.3 Business-to-business marketing communications

Marketing communications is a part of the marketing mix which consists of product, price, promotion and place. In that case marketing communications is referred to the promotion element since exactly this feature is telling a customer about the last three units namely by communicating with the interest groups. However, it is not the only element which can recount a prospective customer about the product since the price also means a lot by implying products' quality. (Anderson & Narus 2009, 54.)

Marketing communications implicate the generation of something common between a seller and a buyer namely mutual understanding of the product, organisation or business operations. The objective of marketing communications is dual since it consists of the product awareness as well as the creation of customer relationship. The product awareness is dependent on the generation, maintenance and soundness with the company's customers. Marketing communications should pursue the customer

relationship by the time it was established. All in all, the main purpose is to increase or to affect the sales directly or else indirectly. (Bergstrom & Leppänen 2003, 275.)

As it was mentioned above, the approach for organisational advertising is totally different from end-users' advertising. Thus, in the case of b-to-b markets it is important to understand that not only customer's needs should be heard but also a made-to-order solution provided. There are various communications which can be applied to b-to-b markets. For instance, personal communication methods which mean not only personal selling but also trade fairs. As far as personal communications can be considered individualised ones, direct mail is another method for reaching interest groups. It can be reported that b-to-b markets are more associated which allows utilizing a few methods at the same time. (Pelsmacker et al 2004, 520.)

Marketing communications is willing to provide with information its target segments. Nevertheless, it is extremely imperative to impart the meaningful information. That is why marketing communications plan should be structured very duly while determining mutual insight with each target segment. (Anderson & Narus 2009, 111.)

Figure 2 represents the way how strongly marketing communications are connected to organisations and their customers. This figure perfectly illustrates that the process of achieving a certain understanding is totally mutual since both parties should take each other's motives into consideration. Therefore, when thinking about marketing communications plan, it is essential to consider target audience's wants and needs. Alternatively, if a target segment is too far from a company, it is the task of this organisation to expand and link the sphere of mutual understanding. (Fill 2009, 45.)

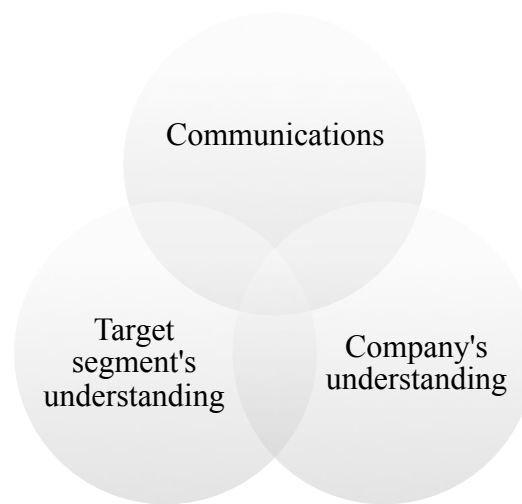


FIGURE 2. The framework of marketing communications (Adapted from Fill 2005, 53)

Moreover, when choosing marketing communications it is needed to define the exact reasons for communication as well as set the goals. Once this step is implemented, it would be much easier to appraise the required resources as well as to gage the level of progress. The most popular models for estimation of marketing communications aims are DAGMAR, which means Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Results, and AIDA, which means Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). However, there is one more model which comprises both of the presented models. The purpose of this model is to possess a certain goal at each stage of the process in order to follow the scheme step by step. (Fill 2009, 64.)

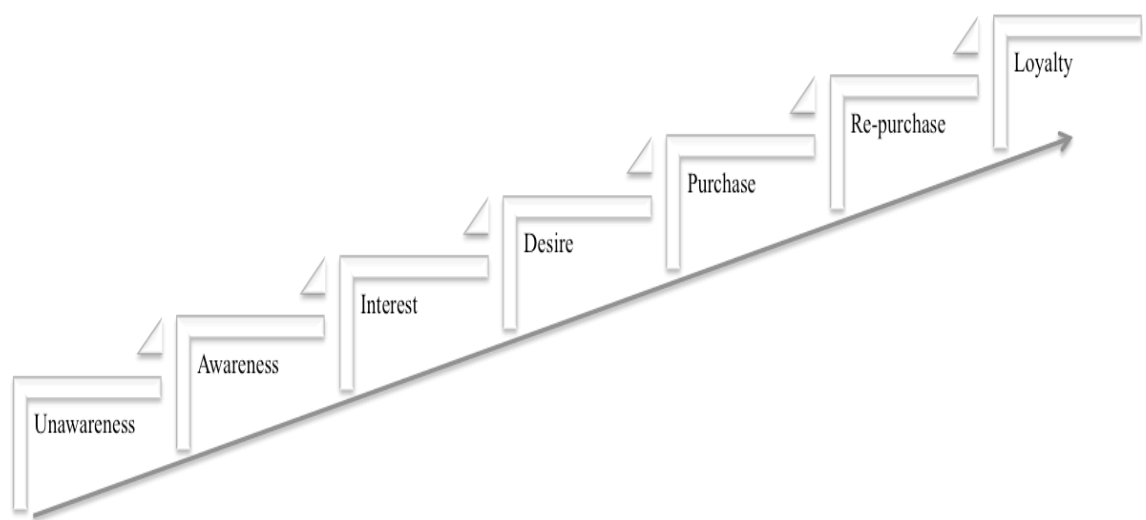


FIGURE 3. The six steps from unawareness to loyalty (Adapted from Fill 2009, 64).

Figure 3 shows the chain of steps starting from unawareness and ending up with loyalty. During the first step none of the customers knows about a product which an organisation wants to sell so that it is important to create awareness in order to build a platform for further actions. Once the awareness is achieved, prospective customers have at least a picture of a product and an understanding of its features. The second step goes for raise of product interest. By the time an interest is evoked, a company should provide its potential customers with all the needed information in order to create an incentive to try it. If this stage is completed successfully, then the next step would be just inevitable. Customers will start buying a product/service while waiting for the derived benefits which should exceed the real price of the product. In this case it is quite essential to satisfy a customer in order to persuade him/her to make a successive purchase. And the last step is certainly connected to loyalty. This is a very important issue as once a company gets a loyal customer, he/she will not only continue buying that product but also will spread a word-of-mouth that plays a particular role in the market. (Fill 2009, 68.)

Consequently, the goal of marketing communications process is to make an impact on a target segment. When a company is aware of its target audience's needs, it can start its communication with a certain segment. Additionally, if customers do not require a concrete product at the moment, it does not mean that they will not need it in future. Therefore, the communication can be still implemented for product awareness and its absorption. (Hutt & Speh 2010, 298.)

2.3.1 Marketing communications methods

Marketing communications can be categorized by four elements that are sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and advertising. Obviously, sales promotion and personal selling are concentrated on product sales while advertising and public relations are centred in the creation of positive image, provision of product information and attraction of target segments. Nevertheless, such a classification is not totally correct since some communications can be referred to a few elements simultaneously. Thus, at the trade fairs there can be utilised personal selling since parties are communicating or sales promotion that goes in line with provided brochures. All types of communication eventually contribute to customers' buyer

behaviour. However, they should be chosen according to the company's field of business, services and products. (Vitale & Giglierano 2002, 420.)

As far as the aim of marketing communications is to reach interest groups and evoke their buying decision process, various groups of marketing communications methods can contribute to achieving the goal (see Figure 4), (Seacord 1999, 134.)

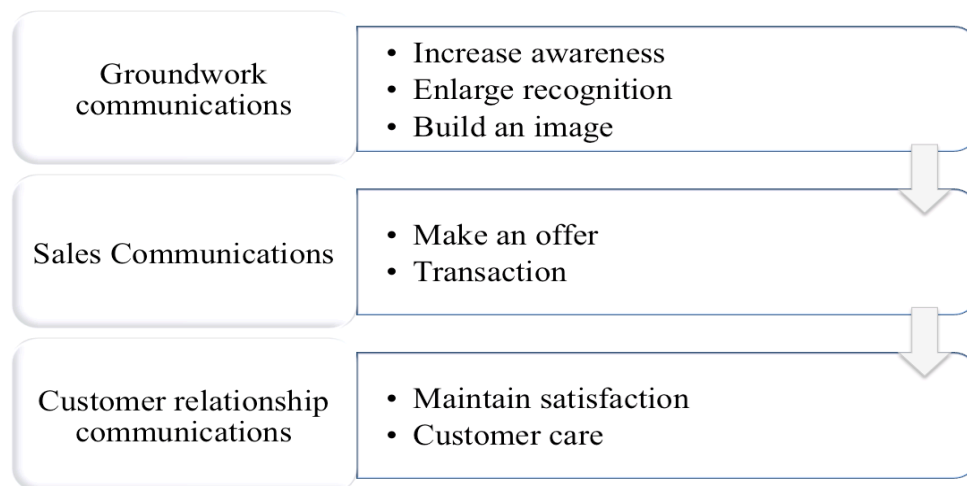


FIGURE 4. Methods in the organisational buyer process (Adopted from Seacord 1999, 134).

Marketing communications methods can be grouped into three categories which are groundwork, sales and customer relationship communications. Groundwork communications imply all the communications happening before the actual purchase. Its aim is to create a foundation for the initial covering. For example, trade fair can be considered as a groundwork communications method. This approach focuses on the increase of product awareness, recognition enlargement and image creation. The way a company provides a basis for the further selling process will generally speak for the company's image. This means that the easier a firm represents the base, the better it will be able to build an image. Therefore, in order to favour a company's business operations, an organisation should draw its target segments' attention. The next method is sales communications that correlates with the ongoing buying process. In case of a trade fair, personal sales work can be exemplified. As for customer relationship communications, it is highly essential when the relationship with customers is already constituted because the key company's purpose then is to uphold and improve customer relationship. (Seacord 1999, 136.)

2.3.2 Groundwork communications

This section will cover such types of groundwork communications as trade fairs and exhibitions, press and publicity management, word-of mouth, online communications and customer reference acquisition.

All of them are considered to be very effective since every method brings its own results and outcomes. By implementing the methods in a proper way, a company can create a very good basis for starting doing business.

Trade fairs and exhibitions

Trade fairs and exhibitions are a terrific opportunity for companies to show their products, increase its awareness, improve the company's image as well as create new customer relationship. Generally, trade fairs are separated into a couple of days namely for professionals and public. It is quite essential to attend and participate in trade fairs and exhibitions because it will ease the process of awareness acquisition in business-to-business market. Thereon, trade fairs and exhibitions should be chosen very properly in order to attract the right audience. (Seacord 1999, 90.)

By the time a company has clarified that fairs need to be attended, it should move to the next stage and consider the following questions: which type of a trade fair to visit, what role is a fair/exhibition playing in its marketing communications, if a firm can reach its target segments, the costs according to the derived benefits as well as company's goals. As a result, a company should create a target-oriented communication plan. (Jefkins 2000, 37.)

Press and publicity management

Press and publicity management accounts for the support of other marketing communications as well as the information provision of product development, changes in the organisation, product launch and etc. This information should reach the company's stakeholders and target groups and it should necessarily have a positive effect. The more data is rendered, the easier it will be to achieve awareness in business-to-business markets. The informing methods which maintain marketing are

the following: customer magazines and other correlated publications, promotional gifts, company events, press releases, news ad articles about products and services, and webpages displaying products. Press releases and professional articles go beyond all the other methods since they are considered to be the most influential ones. (Jefkins 2000, 55.)

As for press releases, their main purpose is to achieve media publicity for the company's products. Once a press release was written by an organisation, they present it to a certain journalist of pertinent media. A press release should be actual and communicatory while providing a reader with the contact person information. A good journalist would be the one who knows at least something about the field of business and perhaps something about the company. Moreover, if the journalist is familiar with a company, he/she can favour the publication. (Jefkins 2000, 56.)

Regarding professional articles, they can be written by either a firm representative or a journalist. Such articles should be made interesting enough for a customer in order to gain positive effect. Besides, if a company's representative is responsible for the composition, he/she should keep in mind that it is not possible to advertise a product in his/her article. (Smith & Taylor 2001, 367.)

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is undoubtedly the most challenging thing to be controlled since the outcomes are normally unpredictable. Good word-of-mouth is usually less powerful rather than a bad one because customers prefer to share their unsuccessful experiences concerning a product while if their satisfaction is on a certain level, they generally stay easy-tempered and just enjoy using this or that product. Therefore, it is quite important to manage the product quality as well as its customer service. Moreover, word-of-mouth can take a back-fire namely if target segments honestly and ethically share the ideas about their positive perception of the brand and a representative is suspected of doing something wrong, it can happen to be even much worse if no word-of-mouth has ever taken place. Besides, some segments might select to ignore a company and that company can certainly do almost nothing about this issue. Alternatively, word-of-mouth can be spread not only by a concrete segment, it can also be set up by the internal personnel of a company. For instance, if a colleague

recommends or carps a product or service, this can ruin a sales representative's reputation as well as the product significance. (Nilson 1998, 194.)

In turn, this method might be considered as the most cost-efficient one since a firm has no need to pay for media. Its interest groups are the media to whom a firm barely pays anything or just very little for execution. If a company properly follows up its operations, it will invent such a product which will be extraordinary in its own way and as a consequence of that, such a product will get talked about and build the brand's values. Furthermore, discussions and debates can be organised in the Internet which provides unparalleled possibilities for word-of-mouth acceleration (Nilson 1998, 196).

The key fact to which a company should heed is the conception of what are the exact product features that became beloved by their customers and which are annoying for them. It is imperative to listen and understand interest groups' opinions, needs and experiences in order to satisfy them in future. (Smith & Taylor 2001, 556.)

Online communications

Online communications is a really important method for groundwork communications because it can be used as a marketing or advertising channel as well as in sales communications purposes. However, this method is also quite a tricky one. Strong side of online communications is defined by the fact that communication is held in the Internet which is contemporary, swift and always available. Current and prospective customers can check the information about the company and its products, leave feedback or follow new trends whenever they want. There is the only drawback of the online communications method that is the information flow that changes extremely rapidly so that it is almost impossible to follow all the news and updates. The online communications method is applied in an effort to improve the brand awareness, increase the number of loyal customers, affect the brand image or carry out different test experiments. (Brennan et al 2010, 233.)

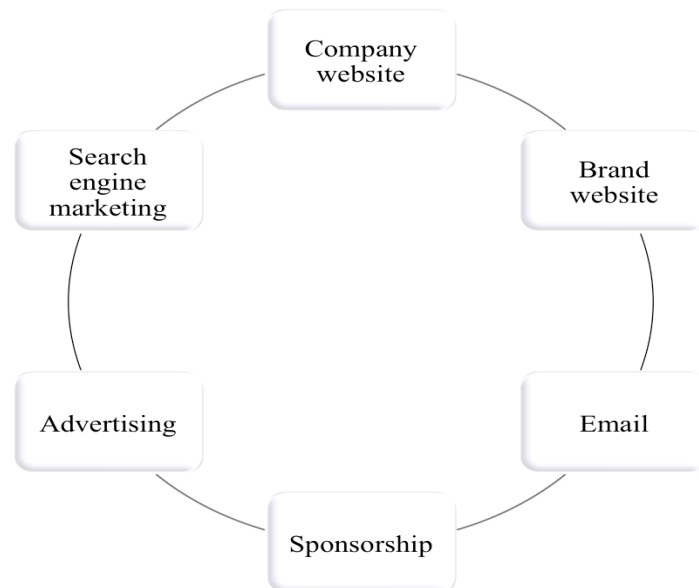


FIGURE 5. Online communications methods (Adopted from Brennan et al 2010, 233)

Figure 5 represents online communications methods which can be used in a marketing communications strategy. Traditionally, companies apply the method of their websites which can be either simple or composite. It is quite important to have a website because potential customers are always searching for information about companies and their products. Hence, it is better to have a well-designed webpage since it is the face of the company. If the website is created in a complex way, a customer can find it annoying and simply switch to a competitor's one. The usability and simple design are the key elements of a good website. Regarding the brand website, it is usually used for presenting products and services of a company, improving brand awareness or increasing sales. Such websites provide a customer with the data about a firm's brand as well as different forums and download functions. (Brennan et al 2010, 235.)

In order to deliver a message straight to a prospective customer, companies use emails. Nevertheless, in order to create a positive image, the message, namely text and style, should be created in a proper way. It is advisable to make it well-structured, clear and close. (Burtenshaw et al 2006, 122.)

Sponsorship is another method which is utilized by companies in order to promote or present new products, associate advertising or exploit other advertising opportunities. This method is not used very often especially by small enterprises because it is sufficiently expensive. (Jefkins 2000, 158.)

Speaking about online advertising, it is a highly effective method to reach the target segments. There are a lot of ways to do it by using advertorials, pop-ups, banners, text advertisements and etc. The right way to attract prospective customers' attention is to choose the website which is mostly used by them, choose the right position so that the advertisement is more than visible, present incentives and create the advertisement with the appropriate typography, colour and offers. (Jefkins 2000, 354.)

The main purpose of search engine marketing is to enlarge the scale and make the products and services easier to find. Search engines include Google, Yandex, Yahoo and etc. Once a customer is looking for a certain product, search engines provide him/her with particular websites which they can investigate later on. Those webpages which are located on the first page normally get the majority of visitors, therefore, it is important to promote a website before it will be done by competitors. (Burtenshaw et al 2006, 123.)

Customer reference acquisition

Customer reference acquisition generally means an interaction between a company and their reference company when the latter can play a customer role by testing a product. Normally a customer reference has the following features: has positive attitudes towards the organisation, is either in need or ready to buy a product which was only launched in the market, accedes to present its objective point of view about a certain product, has a wish to be engaged in the product/service test and agrees on spreading a good word-of-mouth. If an organisation has a powerful reference, this will bring to customers' mind that the product is highly qualitative and reliable. (Nilson 1998, 198.)

2.3.3 Sales communications

Sales communications comprise those communication methods which contribute to the buying process namely by providing an offer and driving it to the real purchase. As far as this research is turned to the initial buying process which imply customer acquisition, only corresponding approaches are going to be discussed. (Giglierano & Vitale 2002, 420.)

Traditionally it is considered to interpret sales communications only as the personal selling process. However, despite its significance, there are two more stages which should be implemented before. Figure 6 illustrates how all the steps are interrelated with each other and what are the objectives of each of them. The main concept of this figure is that, firstly, the interest should be evoked, then the negotiation stage should be executed very properly in order to reach personal selling phase where the actual purchase will be done. (Nilson 1998, 201.)

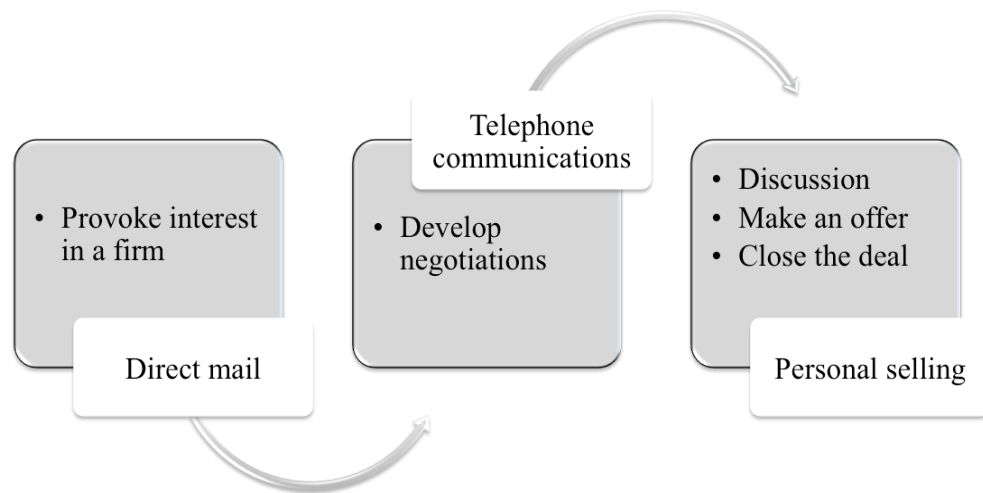


FIGURE 6. B-to-b sales communications (Adopted from Giglierano & Vitale 2002, 423).

Undoubtedly, the approach to each segment is different since all of them are operating in various fields and having their own specifics. However, the general model for implementing sales communications is generally followed by many companies because it is logical and well-structured. The first step which is direct mail can be referred to groundwork communications at some point since there is no purchasing process at this stage. In most cases direct mail is the starting point before moving to negotiations because it is most likely that none of the target segment's will go for the negotiation procedure from the first call. It is important to lead a customer step by step to the buying process. Nevertheless, despite the popularity of this model, there are also other ways of how to approach a customer. And as it was mentioned above, this research is concentrated just on the initial buying process so that no other methods are going to be presented. (Brennan et al 2010, 230.)

Direct mail

Direct mail is focused on the creation and improvement of customer relationship. Therefore, direct mail is quite an effective tool which also has a few attractive features. For instance, it can be highly targeted to a particular segment and the effectiveness of this method can be fairly easily measured when looking at the amount of responses. Any direct mail might be tailored which means that it is time-efficient. Moreover, this method is comparatively inexpensive. The timing of this approach is flexible that contributes to be implemented in line with other marketing communications activities. (Gigliero & Vitale 2002, 436.)

Nevertheless, there are also some drawbacks about direct mail. The most important one is that potential customers may simply ignore a mail. Moreover, the majority of customers do not cherish direct mails and find it as a second-class medium. Such a fact can undermine the customer perceptions of the product offer. But despite all the minuses mentioned above, direct mail has been proven to be highly effective, consequently, it should be used. (Gigliero & Vitale 2002, 436.)

Direct mail comprises a few different approaches such as emails, newsletters, brochures and letters. Companies prefer to mark their return address in order to receive any questions regarding the product or even a possible meeting offer. When creating a direct mail, it is imperative to consider its continuity and goals. Generally, direct mail is sent at the beginning of the year simply because companies get into a new budget period. Moreover, direct mail is also useful at the end of the buying process since a segment can muse over the next purchase. (Burtenshaw et al 2006, 58.)

Direct mail is especially practical for small companies, as they need to attract their potential customers as well as remind their existing ones about themselves. There can be used a multiphase strategy namely when a letter is sent during the first phase, then telephone marketing done, and after that a firm can send a new letter with additional information about their product. (Burtenshaw et al 2006, 59.)

Telephone communications

There are two types of telephone communications that are empowering communications and telemarketing which can be also called sales communications. Speaking about the empowering communications, its main purpose is to organize a meeting with the target segment for further sales negotiations. As for telemarketing, marketing and sales activities are conducted by skilled professionals who are using telecommunications and information technologies. Telemarketing can be both inbound, where a contact is commenced by a potential or existing customer, and outbound, where a contact is initiated by a company. (Brennan et al 2010, 205.)

Even though telemarketing is much more versatile in comparison with direct mail, it still has some disadvantages. For instance, this approach is not appropriate for dealing with complication. Sometimes customers have too much requirements or questions so that face-to-face communication is inevitable. Besides, as a stand-alone medium, sales communications may be insufficient when utilized by its own way. Nevertheless, it is a quite useful tool when combined with other communications activities. (Brennan et al 2010, 206.)

Personal selling

Groundwork and telemarketing communications are building up a strong background for personal selling which is playing a significant role in b-to-b markets because parties should be able to communicate, negotiate and deal with each other. A sales representative should be well-trained, persuasive, skilled, decent as well as he/she should have a profound knowledge of a product since a customer will perceive a firm according to the way a sales representative is behaving (Giglierano & Vitale 2002, 425).

A firm should be acquainted with the customer as well as their needs during the buying process because in other case it would be enormously arduous to sell a product or service. Moreover, it is also significant to remember that selling is not just a single act, it is actually a customer relationship process. Thereon, sometimes it is advisable not to sell or push buying a product but to fix the relationship for the long-term issue. Personal selling is considered to be one of the most expensive methods because there

are a lot of resources which should be spent on the preparation of a right sales representative. (Brennan et al 2010, 208.)

Personal selling is relatively important when a product or service are quite specific and need a lot of information about their features, price, quality and etc. Therefore, the whole selling procedure should be structured in advance in order to dominate and convince a customer. (Nilson 1998, 171.)

2.3.4 Customer relationship communications

It is important not just to attract a customer but also to make a relationship with him. Once a potential customer has made a purchase, a company should start developing and deepening a relationship with him/her. It can be achieved by the same methods as presented in Figure 5 since any customer still needs attention and treatment. An organisation may also establish company events, greetings and magazines focused on its customers. (Brennan et al 2010, 245.)

The customer relationship certainly means much more than just the improvement and development of the relationship but as far as this research only goes for the initial stage of building the customer relationship, it is not relevant to introduce any further details.

2.4 Marketing communications plan

The planning of marketing communications is a part of a thorough strategy which requires both strategical planning, which stands for preliminary stages, and the planning of particular communications methods. The main issues, that are focused in marketing communications, are the objectives, interest groups, message and proper distribution channels. Figure 7 illustrates the key stages of the planning process. (Fill 2005, 283.)

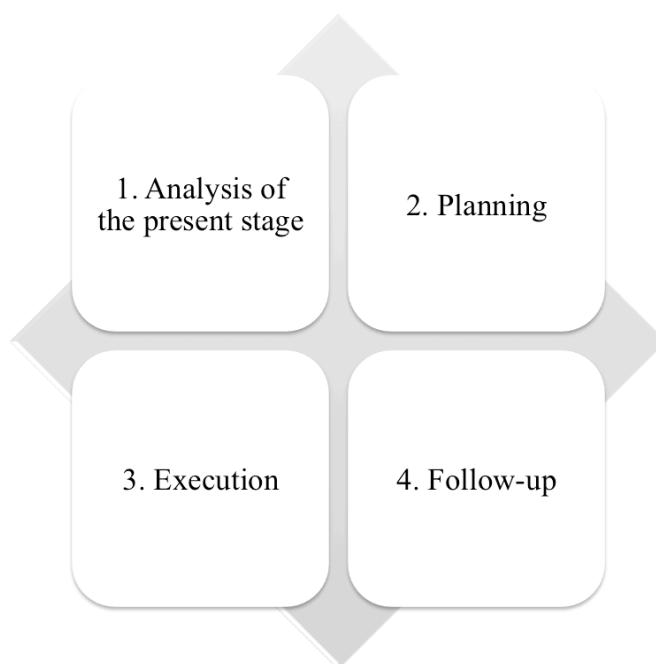


FIGURE 7. Marketing communications planning process (Adopted from Fill 2005, 283)

A marketing communications plan begins with the analysis of the present stage. It is quite imperative that all the employees who are working on the planning are sharing the objectives, the company's vision and an overall view on the marketing communications. Thereon, it will much more beneficial and progressive to develop the ideas from the very beginning. The analysis of the present stage means that there should be conducted information retrieval in line with its further analysis corresponding to the company's policymaking. Generally, the analysis comprises both external and internal factors which can be examined with the help of SWOT analysis. External factors stand for target group identification, competitors and current operational environment with its possible future situation. As for internal factors, they comprise all the activities and elements related to the company or its product. The company is responsible for the level and quality of the analysis according to its needs and wants. Nevertheless, if a company is going to enter a new market, the in-depth analysis is just necessary. (Fill 2005, 283.)

The next step is the exact planning process where should be defined the objectives and the corresponding strategy to achieve those goals. It is important to take into consideration interest groups, budgeting, schedules and the responsible person when

creating a particular execution plan. Therefore, the plan will explicate all the available resources. (Fill 2005, 284.)

During the last stage it is quite significant to define the ways of how to measure the possible success as well as the appropriate follow-up methods. Once the company has clarified it and completed in process, it can apply the received information for the next present stage analysis. (Fill 2005, 284.)

2.4.1 Target market segmentation

The key element of any marketing campaign, advertising or marketing communications planning is the identification of particular interest groups. An organisation should have a clear picture of the market it wants to enter in order to attract the right audience. In this way a company saves a lot of money because it tries to reach only their concrete target market but not the whole one. Moreover, it is important to distinguish at least several target segments in order to apply various marketing communications methods. Hence, the target audience segmentation contributes to the proper choice of distribution channels and how and when to utilize them. (Anderson et al 1999, 52.)

A company should distinguish all the chosen interest groups extremely thoroughly because this will certainly favour the better results as there would be a clear understanding which marketing communications methods should be used for each target segment. The more information a company knows about its target groups, the more effective their message would be delivered. (Anderson et al 1999, 53.)

2.4.2 Budgeting

Budget allocation highly varies from company to company but still remains one of the main tools for planning, allocating the resources efficaciously and following-up process. There should be two types of costs, which are predetermined and actual ones, in order to define the needed amount of budget. Predetermined costs mean that they are computed and estimated in advance, e.g. the during planning process, while actual costs represent the real amount of money that was spent. Moreover, it furthers the possible comparison of the costs. Budgeting can be considered as a lucrative

investment for a company since the results are visible only in a long run. When a company considers budgeting framing, it should present a flexible budget since anything can happen along the marketing communications process. For instance, there might appear some economic, political or environmental issues as well as internal operational ones. (Brennan et al 2010, 180.)

There are three different marketing communications costs which should be taken into account during the planning process. First of all, the planning costs cover all the resources that were presented by a company. Hence, the company's personnel work as well as services which are bought from an advertising agency should be calculated as expenses. Secondly, when the plan is ready for its execution, there might appear some extra costs such as materials used or incentives for trade fairs. And the last cost which should be computed is the one which goes for the follow-up namely for provided surveys and various reports. (Brennan et al 2010, 181.)

2.4.3 Execution and follow-up

When an organisation has created and analysed the whole marketing communications plan, it should execute it. There are two important principles which should be interpreted before the execution: proper organisation and resource allocation of marketing communications and organisation of external partners and subcontractors for prospective cooperation. All in all, all the activities should be concentrated on the achievement of the stated goals, therefore, the know how in both professional and strategical way is required. (Burtenshaw et al 2006, 78.)

Regarding the follow-up stage, it is quite a significant part of marketing communications plan. Firstly, the follow-up results should be analysed, measured, evaluated and applied. Then, they should be examined in a proper way in order to refer to this analysis in future. (Burtenshaw et al 2006, 79.)

2.4.4 Planning of marketing communications mix

Marketing communications mix is defined as several marketing communications methods put together and it depends on such factors as external and internal situation, kind of business or product life cycle. Different communications methods are used in

line with each other in order to become mutual substitutes and eventually reach target segments. However, it is claimed that firstly it is imperative to identify and set objectives before choosing which methods should be used. Additionally, even though all the marketing communications methods account for different goals like data collection, image creation or even a test purchase, they still constitute small pieces of a huge pattern. In order to influence buyer behaviour and customer relationship, it is needed to choose exactly those communications methods which will absolutely promptly reach firm's interest groups. By defining the media where current and potential customers receive information which affects their buying behaviour, a company can stand out from its competitors because it can create extraordinary ways of reaching the target audience. (Brennan et al 2010, 179.)

When choosing the combination of marketing methods, it is important to pick up only the most effective ones but not the whole range of them. If marketing communications methods are chosen correctly and thoroughly, then the effect might be improbable. Furthermore, the methods should be chosen rationally namely according to the company's budget and customers' contact points so that the message will be delivered to the right audience. (Brennan et al 2010, 179.)

2.5 Synthesis of the theoretical framework

In b-to-b markets the prospect is an organisation rather than an individual customer so that their buying behaviour highly varies. Certainly, a particular approach should be applied for b-to-b markets because organisational buyer behaviour is much more complex and uncertain. Nevertheless, understanding buyer behaviour is very important because it affects marketing communications planning.

Organisational decision-making is dependent on target segments' choice, definition and description. Target group segmentation is the framework for marketing activities implementation since it corresponds to the organisation's resources while facilitating the best commercial results. It is imperative to distinguish the concrete interest groups, their wants, needs and expectations in order to achieve better results. There are three market-selection strategies which may be utilized by companies: undifferentiated marketing, differentiated marketing and concentrated marketing.

Marketing communications is a part of marketing mix which consists of product, price, promotion and place. Marketing communications accounts for the promotion element since it provides all the information about other components of this mix. The aim of marketing communications is to regulate the communication between a company and a prospect while affecting the latter's decision in future. In order to find the best ways to reach target segment's attention, it is needed to investigate the behaviour and expectations of it in a proper way.

There are quite many marketing communications approaches which may be applied by organisations in order to carry out the best results according to the company's available resources. The choice is usually up to the field of business, products and their life cycle. This research indicates three marketing communications which are groundwork, sales and customer relationship communications. However, only the first two ones are minutely described since they are more significant when a company is going to enter a new market.

Groundwork communications is generally used before the actual purchasing process because its aim is to create a foundation for primary transaction. Thereon, its focus is put on the product awareness, recognition enlargement and image creation. Such an approach comprises such methods as trade fairs and exhibitions, press and publicity management, word-of-mouth, online communications and customer reference acquisition.

Regarding sales communications, it counterparts with the ongoing buying process as a certain offer is provided in line with an accurate push to a real purchase. When utilizing this approach, it is needed to understand interest groups' needs in order to satisfy them in future. The methods which can be used are the following: direct mail, telephone communications and personal selling.

Marketing communications plan requires extensive planning that consists of four stages: analysis of a present stage, strategic planning, execution and follow-up. In order to create a good plan, it is important to define its objectives, target segments, message and proper methods. It is advisable to choose a mix of several methods rather than use all of them in order to achieve the needed results.

3 POSITION OF KARAVA SAUNA LTD ON THE MARKET

The objective of this section is to examine the analysis of the present stage of the case company which is the first phase of the marketing communications plan. It comprises the overview of the company and its SWOT analysis.

3.1 Overview of Karava Sauna Ltd

Karava Sauna Ltd is headquartered in Finland and it specializes in sauna interiors and saunas itself. The company was founded in 1988 and it is still in the development stage because their website has been reinvented lately and the company is working on its new webstore at the moment. Its customers are wholesale and construction companies, timber and hardware shops as well as private consumers (<http://www.karava.fi/en/yritys/>).

The products that Karava Sauna Ltd produces are the following: panels, saunas, benches and different types of lists. All the materials are made from first class timber alder, heat-treated and natural aspen, hardwood and first quality softwood (<http://www.karava.fi/en/yritys/>).

The company has already gained its popularity in Finland which is why at the moment its main objective is to explore all the opportunities in the Russian market. The reason for that takes place from the fact that Russian market is becoming increasingly profitable for many investors due to the rapid pace of GDP growth, relatively huge population and appropriate buying power. In order to start doing business with Russian companies, it is usually required to understand the legislation system, rule of conduct with authorities and the whole way of doing business in a foreign market. However, Karava Sauna Ltd is not demanded to focus on all the issues mentioned above because its main objective is to find prospects which will do all this work. This means that the company itself will not be responsible for negotiating with Russian clients, launching its office there or even make advertising. The reason for this is that Karava Sauna Ltd just needs to find those companies which will become its seller dealers. However, in order to achieve it, it is important to negotiate with the representatives of these companies as well as sign a contract.

As far as Karava Sauna Ltd is quite a small company in terms of personnel, it is pretty hard for the owner to deal with all the upcoming issues and ideas. Moreover, none of the staff is able to speak Russian language for implementing at least the first stages of cooperation. Therefore, a company has applied to an advertising agency for certain services such as the strategy and marketing communications plan for expansion to Russian market, negotiations with the customers, advertising, change of its website and launch of a webstore and translation of online webpages.

3.2 Specifics of Finnish and Russian sauna markets

The attitude of Finnish population towards sauna issues is totally different from the sauna perception of Russian one. In Finland sauna is considered to be a part of everyday life, the place where a person can receive some extra energy by being relaxed, the product which is present almost in every single apartment. Besides that, their way of visiting it also varies from the Russian one because Finnish people can go there even without such a complimentary product as a swimming-pool. There is also one more distinctive element: the Finnish never eat or drink in sauna as well as it is not allowed to speak about the job, religion and title. Hence, Finnish people value sauna on an unparalleled level (Bosworth 2013).

In turn, Russian people adore visiting saunas for celebration issues. Sauna is intended to be a place for celebrating different holidays, birthday parties, family occasions, meetings with friends and sometimes even business meetings. Moreover, the Russians, who are living in towns and cities, prefer to go to special places like spa, swimming-pools or relaxation centers rather than build a sauna inside the house. The reason for it is that the majority is living in the apartments as well as it is much harder and challenging to build a sauna than just to pay some money for something that was already built for them. Nevertheless, those people who are building or having cottages in the countryside, they prefer to have their own sauna either inside the cottage or in a separate house nearby. Consequently, the market can be divided into two categories: end-users and corporate clients (Ari News, Agency of Russian Information, 2012).

In a nutshell, it may be said that the Russian market requires a totally different approach by Karava Sauna Ltd due to such dissimilar cultural values. The idea to be expanded to the Russian market is simultaneously challenging while quite a profitable

one. By negotiating and signing contracts with Russian companies, products and saunas of Karava Sauna Ltd will be sold much faster in comparison with the situation if the company have decided to start doing business in Russia by itself. Seller dealers are professional and reliable companies which are trusted by the Russian prospects which are organisational customers and end-users. Therefore, seller dealers can easily promote and sell Finnish saunas without any real participation of any representatives of Karava Sauna Ltd.

3.3 SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is a simple but a very useful tool which helps to identify the current situation of a company and show what is possible to change. Figure 8 represents strengths and weaknesses of internal company's environment as well as opportunities and threats of the external environment.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Product unity(product+service) ▪ Know-how and expertise ▪ Reliable quality ▪ Manufacturing methods and equipment ▪ Customization ▪ Fast delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited resources ▪ Current marketing communications ▪ Relatively expensive products ▪ Unknown in the market ▪ Lack of distribution channels ▪ Language barrier ▪ Unawareness of Russian sauna market and its customers
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growing industry ▪ Marketing communications plan (both b2b and b2c) ▪ Popular field of business now and in future ▪ Wide networks in different fields of business ▪ Use of boundless imagination for creating new models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tough competition with other Finnish companies ▪ Possible economic and political crisis ▪ Industry is growing but still not valued in the same way as in Finland ▪ Price strategy ▪ Consistency of standards due to long-term contracts with suppliers and third parties

FIGURE 8. SWOT analysis of Karava Sauna Ltd

4.3.1 Strengths

The strengths of the company are put mainly on its products' quality and reliability. All of them are produced on the local factory in Finland which allows to have good natural building and other material for the goods manufacture. Moreover, Karava Sauna Ltd uses its own machinery for grading and kick drying which certainly contributes to the products' quality.

All the personnel has been working in the company already for a long time so that they are professionals in their field and have an outstanding skill for creating good products. The durability of the company's operations indicates that it is a competitive form with demanding products.

All the inquiries which are received by the company are always examined properly in order to create the best solutions for the presented order. The distinguish company's feature is that they provide a possibility for customization namely if a customer wants to have any extraordinary, it will be done without any hitch. The delivery issues are also pretty important for this business since customer's reaction and satisfaction also depends on this factor. Therefore, the company delivers a product as soon as possible without any deadlines.

4.3.2 Weaknesses

Karava Sauna Ltd is a relatively small company which does not possess so many resources. As far as it is unknown in Russian market at the moment and has not references over there, marketing communications plan will most probably reduce the risks and help to allocate the budget according to company's resources.

Saunas and materials related to them are quite expensive which makes this business composed because the products are not coming for the urgent every day use, therefore, there is no rush for coming or leaving an inquiry. According to this fact, a company should realize that the effect of any strategical plan will not appear just in a second as customers need time for attaining information about the company, defining the products and etc.

Karava Sauna Ltd strongly believes that Russian market is a lucrative opportunity for the expansion and firm's profitability. However, the lack of even simple understanding about cultural values concerning saunas is playing a disastrous role in the whole process. It is important to know and interpret the prospective market that a company wants to enter in order to avoid numerous mistakes as well as spend the budget wisely. Moreover, a company should have at least one representative who is able to communicate with any Russian customers even on a very low level. If such a person appears, then Russian prospects would value and respect a company even more.

4.3.3 Opportunities

Spending leisure time outside the city or in spa salons is becoming more and more popular in Russia with every single day. This happens due to the reason that people are getting tired of routine life with amounts of duties, smog and noise. Thereon, they prefer to escape to a place where they will be treated and relaxed in the best possible way. Due to this reason, there are more and more new spa and relaxation centres which occur in Saint-Petersburg and Moscow which is why expansion to Russian market is a huge opportunity for the company.

Marketing communications plan will provide the company with all the needed steps and suggestions how it is better to create, deal, negotiate and understand Russian customers. Furthermore, the plan will build up wide networks that will help to operate even more on the Russian market.

The employees of the company are constantly working on new models of the products in order to match in step with the current trends. As far as it is the century of imagination and creativity, there is a big possibility for the company to design and produce fantastic models.

4.3.4 Threats

It is known that many Finnish companies have been cooperating with Russian ones already for a long time. There are currently four main Finnish competitors which are functioning on the Russian market: Kastor, Harvia, Helo and Sawo. Certainly, they

constitute a huge menace for Karava Sauna Ltd since the products of those companies are already familiar to customers as well as they are aware of the existing brands.

Another threat, which may enormously affect the process of doing business with Russia, is possible economic or political crisis. At the moment there is a small political crisis in the world which has already blighted the economic side.

What is more, if the contract with suppliers or third parties is signed for several years and a company takes the decision to change its strategy or some issues, it cannot generally implement it since anything similar is not registered in the ongoing contract.

4.3.5 Conclusions of SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis has shown the ongoing situation for Karava Sauna Ltd with its pros and cons. The strong side of the company definitely belongs to the quality of products and services. As far as the staff consists of professionals who have foremost skills for creating new products, it is extremely important to develop and improve their knowledge in order to stay tuned. Moreover, the fact that the company provides such a service as customization, it certainly stands for its particularity.

The case company should utilize all the resources in order to become a well-known and big enterprise. At the moment the sauna industry is very popular in Russia, thereon, the firm has a huge opportunity to expand there. It is imperative to match in steps with the current trends so as to get more profit.

However, the expansion to Russian market might be quite a challenging idea due to the differences in cultural values. The firm should understand and listen to Russian customers' wishes and needs, otherwise, it will never succeed there. Also, Russian language might become a problem for the company because there are not that many Russians who speak English even on a good level. It is needed to know at least the basics of the language in order to communicate and negotiate with the customers.

As far as there are already a few Finnish competitors on the Russian market, it might be a bit hard to enter it. In order to increase brand awareness, the company should

stick to the marketing communications plan which will help to find new contacts, spread news about the company, gain word-of-mouth and etc.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a prerequisite for data collection in order to measure and evaluate it by including identification of information gathering methods, creation and administration of instruments as well as organisation and analysis of data. By choosing a concrete research design, the preference is standing for a present range of dimensions of the research process namely reliability and validity of studies, scale and method of enquiry and research method. (Bryman & Bell 2007, 40.)

There are two main types of research: primary and secondary research. Speaking about primary research, it is generally the initial findings which are gathered by a researcher by conducting surveys, carrying out interviews with important people or keeping a diary. This research is normally committed after secondary information has been investigated. As for the secondary information, it is data which was collected by others in magazines, newspapers, radio, television or books. Such information covers the analysis, comparison and summary of different topics. This research is utilized when it is needed to find some framework information, statistics and already conducted research results. (Best & Khan 1989, 90.)

Primary research can be conducted with the help of qualitative and quantitative research methods. There are a lot of ways for collecting data in case of qualitative research because the more detailed the information is gathered, in-depth analysis is prioritized and such questions as how many, how much, how often and how important are presented. Qualitative researchers can apply various approaches for aggregating information such as field notes, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, participant observation, non-participant observation and analysis of documents. Quantitative research is concerned with the accumulation and analysis of information in numeric form. (Blaxter et al. 1996, 61.)

4.1 Data collection method

This study is examined with the help of qualitative research where the semi-structured interviews method is applied.

Semi-structured or guided interview means a method of receiving information with the help of prepared questions while there is also a possibility to create, ask and confirm the acquired information with the help of just built-up questions. There are a few issues which are needed to be taken into account before starting a semi-structured interview. For example, the list of questions should be prepared in advance in order to get the information which is really critical for the research. However, the sequence of questions can be certainly different while the additional questions must vary from interview to interview. Besides that, it is important to present the topic of the upcoming interview as well as all the ethical points such as anonymity and confidentiality. The trust creation between an interviewer and a respondent is very significant from the very beginning because the latter should feel comfortable talking to the interviewer as well as speak honestly so that the information is reliable. Also, the questions are normally open so that it helps to gather more in-depth information. (Marshall & Rossman 2010, 144.)

However, conducting this type of an interview seriously requires a good background in the field of research and certain skills. The researcher should also have a clear picture how to transcript and write down notes about the atmosphere, attitude and etc. Besides that, it is imperative to structure the questions into a logical order, listen carefully and pause when it is needed. (Ritchie & Lewis 2003, 241.)

Once the interviews are written down, the researcher should read the transcripts a few times and make notes in the margins. These notes help to summarize the main idea of the respondent's opinion concerning the stated issue as well as to catch the researcher's attention later on when it is required to move to the analysis stage. When all the interviews are read and interpreted, it is important to divide the answers into some categories in order to see the whole picture and make the conclusions. Sometimes the answers can be very different which certainly exaggerate the analysis process. Nevertheless, if the respondents are clear with their explanations and way of thinking, it is much easier to understand and evaluate the answers since there will be some background for that. (Saunders et al 2009, 340).

4.2 Data collection in practice

The questions that have been asked in the semi-structured interviews are presented in Appendix 1. All of them were composed in a such way that the researcher could depict the valuable and important information for the study. Additionally, all the questions were corresponding to the research objectives at a certain point which was undoubtedly favouring the evaluation procedure.

All the interviews were conducted in Russian language through phone calls because it is the most efficient and opportune way to reach certain people and engage them into the conversation despite the distance. Five interviews were carried out with the companies operating in spa and relaxation industries. All the companies are coming from Moscow and Saint-Petersburg because these cities are the nearest ones to Finland, and their citizens can afford many high-quality products. The interviews were conducted in the period from 3 to 4 April.

The companies which were chosen for the interviews were very diverse. The researcher was trying to attain different opinions from the companies which were operating in similar but still different fields of business. Moreover, all the companies were picked up according to their size as it was important to investigate what kind of operations were going on in large, SME and micro companies, and find out their distinctions. The fact that the respondents were coming from different companies, was bringing interesting and objective points of view.

In order to choose the participants, a convenient sampling technique was used. The respondents were chosen according to the following criteria: knowledge about the topic and their easy access. Thereon, the interviewers were those employees who were responsible for the organisational buyer behaviour because they had much more knowledge rather than an accountant, for example. It was quite easy to reach and contact the respondents since the company's webpages had provided their viewers with all the telephones and emails referring to each department. The researcher had interviewed such employees as purchasing and top-manages as well as the deputy director. According to the agreement of confidentiality, none of the employees' and companies' names are going to be revealed in this study.

The atmosphere which was existing during the interviewing process was practically the same. It was very formal, serious and a bit intense. It happened due to the reason that the respondents were very busy at work while they were trying to give quite informative answers. Besides that, all the interviews lasted around seven minutes which showed that the participants were willing to answer the questions. Despite the fact that all of the participants were busy, they were still very polite and nice towards the researcher. The data was recorded to the digital recorder so that the researcher could have a chance to listen to the tape as many times as it was needed. Also, the digital recorder had contributed to receiving integral answers because the every single word was traced.

Speaking about the interviewing process from the researcher's side, it should be said that the first interview was conducted very properly in terms of ongoing questions. As far as it was the first interview, the researcher was feeling nervous and could barely invent any extra questions from the first time. However, already the second interview has passed much smoother and the researcher was asking more varied questions while feeling free to ask them.

The typology of questions was simple, open, indirect and neutral. Speaking about the analysis phase of the research, the content analysis technique was chosen since it was the most convenient way to understand the textual data. The first thing that needed to be done was the reading of transcripts in order to have a clear picture of the received responses. The transcripts were put into the word-document with the general number of pages comprising twelve sheets. The researcher had read several times the transcripts and made special notes on them in order to ease the further analysis process. Once the main points had been figured out, they were divided into various categories which were analyzed later on. The analysis was implemented according to the ways of answering, similarities, differences and etc of the participants' responses. The interviews had required a lot of efforts from the researcher since it was imperative to expound the data properly and make reliable conclusions. The actual problem was the lack of body language and face-to-face conversations. Nevertheless, despite some difficulties which were met along the way, all the objectives had been met as well as the useful material had been gathered.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS

The section covers the research data analysis, target group segmentation, marketing communications methods and the outcomes of the research. All the information coming out from the interviews is given generally in terms of confidentiality. The results are separated into different topics in order to interpret the information much easier.

5.1 Buyer behaviour in business-to-business markets

First of all, it is important to understand and clarify buyer behaviour according to the respondents' answers. This topic will be focused on such factors as who is the person who makes a buyer decision in a company, to whom marketing communications should be targeted at and which issues affect buyer decision.

All the five respondents have come up with the idea that buyer behaviour strongly depends on the size of a company which might be large, SME and micro. In large corporations there is always a purchasing department or at least one representative who is responsible for purchasing decision. In turn, SMEs and small enterprises do not have a specific person who will make buyer decisions because such kinds of companies barely have an opportunity to have a whole purchasing unit. It happens due to the limited amount of resources. Therefore, the responsibility generally lies on the owner or CEO of a company. Moreover, the respondents admit that there are no visible differences in buyer behaviour between companies in various target segments, while there are some dissimilarities between the firms of diverse sizes.

Interviewers have agreed that marketing communications should be targeted at those departments or employees that make the final decision in the organisations. This means that they should be again addressed to the purchasing department, CEO or owners of companies. However, one of the respondents have mentioned that it would be much better if marketing communications would be targeted at that person who will be mostly assisted with a product.

Speaking about factors which affect organisational buyer behaviour, the interviewers have said that one of the most influential elements is customer references because

when a company has them, it becomes much smoother to persuade the prospective customers about the company's product and quality of service. However, customers pay attention not only to the quality and customer references but also to the price. As far as there are a lot of Finnish sauna brands already presented on Russian market, it is quite significant to provide some extra services in order to be differentiated from the competitors since sauna market is not a very varied one and many companies basically have the same characteristics of their products. The respondents find sauna market as a very perspective one because the popularity of saunas is just growing in Russia.

5.2 Business-to-business marketing communications methods

With the help of respondents' answers, it was possible to define the most effective marketing communications methods. For example, customer reference acquisition was found to be as an effective marketing communications tool in order to attract new prospects. It was mentioned that once a company started to deal with new customers, they all required for customer references. Normally, companies gaily agree on cooperation if they are satisfied with a product. Moreover, customer reference relationship often brings benefits to both companies.

Also all the respondents have stated that the role of media is quite important in the field of business. They admitted that they are constantly following the news and articles in construction, leisure time and relaxation-oriented journals as well as in other professional magazines and newspapers. Besides that, another imperative media which should be taken into account is Internet. By looking through the news and following the media overall, the companies try to investigate how their competitors act. One of the interviewers has mentioned that the possibility of knowing at least anyone from press industry can favour the publication of the company's press release that eventually will enormously contribute to the increase of coverage. Another respondent has pointed out that if a company is not able to post any of its articles in a professional magazine, it can still put advertisement there.

Furthermore, the interviewers revealed the importance of the companies' websites as well as their webpages. As for the websites, not all of the respondents assented on its high significance while webpages were agreed to be very important by everyone. The respondents are assured that a well-designed webpage is a face of a company which

certainly should comprise some data about company history, products as well as probable references. Such kind of activity makes a prospect believe that a firm is a trustworthy and reliable one.

Regarding the methods which should be used when starting a first contact with a prospect, the opinions turned out to be different. Some reckon a phone call as the most efficient method while few other respondents think that face-to-face meetings or an email is the best approach.

Additionally, all the respondents pointed out that networking is a quite significant factor for the company's success because when a company is visible for the competitors, they create their own image of this company. It can be either a good or a bad one but the fact that the competitors are aware of a new company, makes them being pressured.

The opinion regarding trade fair exhibitions was also quite different. Some respondents find trade fairs as a big opportunity to find new customers as well as increase brand awareness while others think that they need to spend that much money almost in vain. Especially small companies do not benefit a lot from such trade fairs since they spend much more than they eventually get.

As far as the interviews were held with the representatives of seller-dealers companies, there was a question about the ratio of organisational customers as well as end-users. They admit that they have mostly end-users because at the moment a lot of people are building summer houses and try to modernize it as much as they can. As it was mentioned above, this is a new trend in Russia and everyone wants to be seen as a well-to-do person. As for the organisational prospects, they mean to be spa and relaxation centres. The respondents find the cooperation with both parties as a very imperative issue since clients can influence a word-of-mouth as well as give their objective feedback. Therefore, companies try to be very attentive and understanding with all the customers.

Speaking about the methods which are applied by the competitors, the respondents mention that they are practically the same. Thereon, it is quite important to be distinctive when using any marketing communications methods.

6 PRELIMINARY MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The preliminary marketing communications plan has been developed in the conducted study successfully. The first stage of the marketing communications plan goes for the SWOT analysis of the case company where all the pros and cons are depicted. By examining the data, the company will be able to create a proper strategy for entering the Russian market.

As for the planning stage, there are provided different marketing communications methods that can be applied according to the company's decision. Additionally, the researcher has presented the recommendations to which the company can also refer. Some real examples of media channels or competitors might be extremely useful for Karava Sauna Ltd.

The firm can certainly choose its own time frame for the plan execution. However, it is recommended to consider the time schedule which is presented in the section 5.3.4. In this case the efficacy of the marketing communications plan would be more impressive. Budgeting section was not provided in the study since this information is confidential.

Regarding the last stage of the marketing communications plan which is called "follow-up", the study has shown that it is important to estimate and analyze the results of the marketing communications methods which have been used during the execution phase. If the company follows this stage duly, it will be able to avoid certain mistakes in future.

6.1 Interest groups

At the moment the case company does not have any customers in Russia. What is more, it does not really even have any specific target market either. Due to the fact that the resources are limited, it is imperative to apply concentration strategy in order to define interest groups. It is absolutely not needed to focus on the whole market since it would be done just in vain.

As it was mentioned above, marketing communications plan is going to be set aside for such target market as spa and relaxation centres. These interest groups were selected for two reasons: to make the prospective companies familiar with the case company so that they could buy their products in future and to extend the network in the industry since it is be certainly important when doing business.

Once the target groups are identified, it is needed to indicate who exactly is going to be responsible for marketing communications. According to the research results, such a person varies in compliance with the company size. In this case, it should be targeted at the CEO of the company.

6.2 Marketing communications methods

The outcome of this research is the preliminary marketing communications plan for Karava Sauna Ltd. The purpose of marketing communications plan is to increase brand awareness, favour new customer acquisition and create a pivot in the Russian market. The company's idea is to be well-known among Russian customers as well as a worthy partner in the sauna market. Marketing communications plan should be designed in accordance with the company's objectives.

Since the company is yet a small enterprise with limited resources, it is needed to concentrate just on the interest groups in order to achieve the best results with their communication approaches.

Marketing communications plan is composed on the basis of the marketing communications strategy which comprises three following categories: groundwork communications, sales communications and customer relationship communications. Nevertheless, only first two categories would be taken into account since marketing communications plan goes only for the initial stage of building customer relationship.

The message of marketing communications should be planned extremely properly in order to create a right company image. The research data shows that customers' first will is to know the price and origin of a product they are interested in. Besides that, customer references are pretty important to include as well because their impact on

buyer decision is very huge. Normally customer references help customers to realize the quality of company's products and services.

5.3.2 Groundwork communications

Karava Sauna Ltd does not have any groundwork communications at the moment. Moreover, the company does have a clear picture what exactly should be imparted during groundwork communications which purpose is to uphold trading. Consequently, companies are generally willing to increase brand recognition and awareness, create a company image and extend their network. As far as the company is currently in the development stage and trying to gain new customer acquisition, it is quite important to pay attention to the groundwork communications because this is the real basis for starting any cooperation. All the groundwork communications methods are presented in accordance with the research information:

Trade fairs and exhibitions

The objectives of attending trade fairs are to improve company's image, show its products, create new customer relationship and increase brand awareness. Despite different respondents' opinions concerning this method, the researcher finds out that it is still important to visit trade fairs because the case company is totally unknown on Russian market. It is absolutely impossible to become a well-known brand without creating brand awareness even in the very beginning.

The representatives of Karava Sauna Ltd or the advertising agency, where they have applied for the service, need to attend trade fairs at least once per year. For example, there is such a trade fair as "Bath-House 2014" which is going to be held in October in Moscow, Russia. This trade fair has been conducted for 13 years already and it is considered to be a very important and particularized event. It means to present the products, equipment and accessorizes for saunas and their interior. As far as this trade fair is conducted annually, it is pretty easy to find the data about the past years and investigate what kind of companies are attending the trade fair.

The best outcome from trade fairs can be received by the increase of brand awareness and new contacts acquisition. A company should not just distribute the brochures about its products while, in turn, it should focus on contact information collection

from the prospective customers. When a representative arrives to the exhibition or trade fair, he must be well-prepared and active in order to achieve the best out of his visit.

Additionally, sometimes press journalists is also coming to trade fairs which means that a company should set up its stand in a very attractive way. Journalists are searching for innovations and interesting objects for writing their press releases, therefore, any appearance in press will just favour the company's image. The effectiveness of attending trade fairs can be measured by the amount of new contacts acquired during and after the event, probable articles or press releases and new visitors of the company's website.

Press and publicity management

Press and publicity management contributes to the brand awareness of the company by publishing press releases or professional articles about its products or the company itself. Since the case company is still a small enterprise, any publishment will bring positive effect towards the firm. However, some publishers are not really interested in writing articles about micro companies which is why the case company should not spend too much money for this method. Moreover, as far as the company is still unknown on the Russian market, it will be quite hard to estimate the results of press releases or articles.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to attract journalists' attention, for example, by attending trade fairs. The company's representative should utilize this approach in the way that interest groups will be informed about company's upcoming news. Such up-to-date information might evoke press representative's attention who can eventually have a will to write an article about the company which has just appeared on the market. Such kind of articles usually have a positive effect on interest groups' opinion since they are not a paid advertisement but a fair point of view of a certain journalist. When a company has some message to deliver to the target group, it should have prepared a press release and transmit it to the right media. For instance, it can be any professional magazine in spa, leisure or construction industry, for instance, "Home Design", "Swimming pools and saunas" or "Euroconstruction". Moreover, the case company can also post a press release to their firm webpage. A representative of the

company, who is in charge of writing a press release, must bear in mind that it should be informative and predicated. Also it is necessary to mention the contact information of the person who can be got into touch for further details.

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is a very effective way of becoming well-known among prospects. Even though sometimes feedback can be not the one the company is willing to get but it is still bearable because customers are becoming aware of existing products. Referring to the research information, it can be said that this method is very essential especially in cases of small enterprises. Moreover, word-of-mouth also allows to wide networks. It is extremely significant to pay attention to every detail when talking to a customer, otherwise, there would be spread wrong feedback. Each prospect should be as satisfied as the company can ever make him feel that way.

The case company should always notify its stakeholders and potential prospects about everything that happens with the company. By doing this, the enterprise will be seen as an active and prospective firm which is working on its development and services.

This method is quite easy to achieve with the help of other marketing communications approaches. Since all the other methods are creating a framework for the company's operations, word-of-mouth provides the target audience with their outcomes.

Online Communications

Online communications method is playing quite a significant role for the company's image creation because nowadays every single person uses Internet and searching for information there. Nevertheless, many organisations still do not have a clear understanding how much money they should invest into this method, what are the right distribution channels and resources for that.

Referring to the research data, it can be summed up that webpages are one of the first features to which a prospective customer is paying attention. Moreover, the company is limited not only in resources but also in time which means that webpages are the most efficient ways to prove the company's trustworthiness and reliability by this moment. It is advisable to pay a special attention to the content of webpages because

currently they do not provide that much information as their competitors. First of all, there are not a lot of webpages while they still look a bit empty. It is needed to add more data about the company's history and its products as well as information about sauna industry in general. The company should also keep in mind that if it wants to expand to a foreign market, it should provide its potential prospects with as much information as it can in order to gain trust and brand awareness.

The company's aim is to create a particular history of its operations as well as make them look professional. By doing this, the firm should define its potential users, which information will be certainly interesting for them and how to force to revisit the webpages. Moreover, there can be included some customer references.

Research results have shown that visitors mostly appreciate simple design and easy usability when speaking about webpages. There must not be any irrelevant information on the website because potential customers can just switch to the competitors' website. The website must be catching, informative and easy to use.

Another online communications method is email which stands for the communication part with a prospect. Therefore, the messages should be written very accurately and properly in order not to ruin the company's image. It is better not to include into emails public and enduring information since they can easily read that on the website.

The company can indubitably check the number of users which have visited its webpages and website by referring to such website statistics tools as Google Analytics.

As far as Karava Sauna Ltd is a small enterprise, it is too early to apply such methods as sponsorship and search engine marketing since they are quite expensive. The better way would be to invest this money into other marketing communications methods in order to achieve faster results.

Customer reference acquisition

According to the research information, customer references are always required by customers. Undoubtedly, the case company does not have any customer references in Russia but it has a lot of them in Finland. It is advisable to translate at least some of

them so that when their potential prospects will ask for the references, the company will have at least something to show. Once it gets a Russian customer reference, it will become a little easier to attract Russian customers.

It was found out that customer references are quite easy to obtain since they imply mutual benefit. Once an organisation agrees on becoming a reference company, it brings positive feedback and opinion about another firm's products and services. When customers are reading such references, they strive to think that the products are seriously very reliable and qualitative. A reference company also gains some benefits from such cooperation, for example, it gets more coverage.

Furthermore, the company might attain such organisations which will play a customer role by testing the company's products. In this case it is important to negotiate about a reference treaty so that the case company will not have to wait for another customer reference. A customer reference should have some of the following characteristics: spread a good word-of-mouth, have a positive attitude towards the case company, be interested in buying a certain product or willing to present its objective point of view regarding the company's products. By the time the company has a customer reference, it is needed to get a reference about the quality of products as such a feature is related to the strong side of the case company.

5.3.3 Sales communications

When the company has done groundwork communications, it should start paying attention to sales communications because they lead customers to buyer decision. As far as the case company does not have any sales communications at the moment, it should undoubtedly begin planning them carefully.

Groundwork and sales communications are quite complimentary methods since if the groundwork communications were implemented successfully, then sales communications will process in the same way. Sales communications are utterly important for the company because they contribute to the first purchase. Karava Sauna Ltd currently uses email, telephone communications and personal selling but only on the territory of Finland. It may be considered to be a good strategy while all of the methods stand for different aims.

Sales communications comprise such approaches as direct mail, telephone communications and personal selling. Each approach has its own objectives which the company should define for itself in order to achieve more effective results.

Direct mail

The objective of direct mail is to evoke a potential prospect's interest and provide him/her with all the needed information about the products. Taking into account that customers are already familiar with the case company due to groundwork and sales communications, direct mail facilitates the chance to present some extra information about the products. Direct mail can be considered to be a framework for sales communications since it is the very primary point of getting in touch with customers.

Direct mail should be addressed just to the interest groups as well as it is needed to write it in a very proper way. Moreover, when the company is sending an email, it is better to target it to a certain person as such an act which shows the respect to the company. The timing of direct mail should be planned very cautiously and go in line with other marketing communications methods.

With the help of direct mail, it is easy to maintain a contact with current and potential customers, thereon, direct mail might be sent several times per year in order to remind them about the company. It can also happen that by the time the first contact was created, a prospect was not really interested in the company's products or there was no need for purchasing them. But if they again receive an email from the company, they may change their mind and eventually buy the products. Additionally, current customers can decide to purchase some other products of the company which will also bring profit to Karava Sauna Ltd. The efficiency of direct mail can be assessed by the amount of new customers as well as number of visitors of the company webpages.

As far as there are no representatives in the case company who know Russian language, it is still advisable to contact Russian companies at least in English language because if those companies are seller-dealers, they will most probably know English since they are working with many international clients.

Telephone communications

The company should use telephone communications for arranging a meeting with prospective customers. During such a meeting it is needed to talk about the products, set the price, negotiate with the customers and persuade them to buy a product. Therefore, this method cannot be called as a sales one but it may be said that telephone communications is just a tool for further sales operations. As it was mentioned in the section 2.3.1, firstly direct mail should be sent and only then telephone communications done.

Research results have shown that phone calls are reckoned to be the most effective communications method. Moreover, it is also the most convenient method since both parties are located in different countries. When a company is going to make a call, it is advisable to introduce the topic and indicate the customer's need. The firm can also send a direct mail in advance so that when it makes a phone call, it will be easier to expostulate the potential prospect.

Personal selling

Personal selling approach is the key element to which the company should really pay attention. Sales representative is firstly perceived in the way groundwork and other sales communications methods were implemented. Consequently, it is again proven that all the marketing communications methods are extremely complimentary.

The aim of personal selling is to influence buyer decision, make an offer and close the deal. If the customer's needs and wishes are recognized, it will be much easier to close the deal as the sales representative will know how to do it properly. Undoubtedly, the sales representative is obliged to know the company's products very well, the industry, the competitors as well as be able to answer upcoming questions. Moreover, if the representative of the company is able to provoke and engage a customer into the topic he really concerns about, it will become just easy to sell the product.

According to the research data, face-to-face contact should be arranged the sooner the better because there are competitors which can entice the company's prospective customers if it protracts the process.

Personal selling is considered to be the best method for the company since the size and resources of the firm do not really let it to implement anything bigger. In this case the only investment the case company is needed to do is to prepare a great sales representative who will correspond to all the requirements. Later on such a method can be estimated by the number of closed deals.

6.3 Scheduling

It is extremely important to schedule the time frame properly in order to achieve better results. Since the company is planning to expand to the Russian market in autumn, it is recommended to start the groundwork communications the sooner the better in order to move on to the sales communications during autumn time.

As for the groundwork communications, they should be carried out in spring and summer while continuing to be implemented during the whole next year. Speaking about sales communications, the company might begin to send emails already in the middle of autumn. Additionally, it is significant to supplement them with the phone calls later on. When the company starts getting new customers, it is still needed to continue groundwork communications in order to increase brand awareness and search for new prospects.

6.4 Execution and follow-up

As far as the case company is willing to start the expansion already this autumn, it is utterly imperative to start carrying out the groundwork communications methods already right now since it will take time until the company will be known in the market.

Moreover, while the company will realize marketing communications methods, it is necessary to collect the information along the way in order to have a chance to analyse it later on. By doing this, the company may avoid previous mistakes, notice which methods were the most efficient ones and focus on them next time.

The company can estimate the effect of marketing communications methods according to certain metrics which have been mentioned in the sections above. In a

year the results and the effect will be already visible that will allow deepening into the analysis stage. This is quite important to do because such analysis will disclose what should be changed in future.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The research problem of the study was defined in line with its objectives and outcomes. The preliminary marketing communications plan was presented while the most effective marketing communications were suggested, interest groups disclosed and b2b buyer behaviour clarified.

By conducting this research, there were found different cultural values concerning sauna industry in Finland and Russia. Nevertheless, even though there are some significant dissimilarities, the traditions of both countries may be considered as strong and deep. Thereon, when expanding to Russian market, the case company should bear this fact in mind.

It is believed that Russian market is giant and has endless opportunities. Moreover, the current modern business environment in Russia is much safer than it was ten years ago. Undoubtedly, the company is interested in its expansion to this foreign market because the chances to succeed are quite high. According to the research data, the Russians are becoming richer and can afford more and more with every single year. The case company has many advantages above Russian companies which are specializing in sauna industry due to the following reasons:

- the Russians value just qualitative products and they are ready to pay twice more in order to be satisfied with the purchase
- health issue goes for the first position so that humid sauna air is very advantageous
- as far as Russia is still an emerging country, all the life pleasure is delivered gradually there. If there is a sauna in the summer house or a person often visits spa centres, this means that it is highly prestigious and that is why more and more people are chasing such a feeling

- according to Russian cultural values, it is a significant thing to have sauna with a swimming pool at one place. These two products are complimentary that allows to enjoy the process even more

The characteristics which are mentioned above are greatly important for the Russians. The case company matches all of them, consequently, it is strongly recommended to expand to Russia. However, there is a big shade in terms of competitors which are coming out from Finland. The case company can have only this threat when firstly starting doing business in Russia. In order to avoid or at least diminish it, Karava Sauna Ltd should stick to the marketing communications plan and see it as a part of daily operations.

The foundation for the successful implementation of marketing communications plan is the understanding of the objectives that stand behind each marketing communications method. What is more, in order to make marketing communications more efficient, it is needed to realize them constantly. The matter of continuity is quite imperative since the company should be seen by its potential customers.

As far as the company is limited in resources, it is recommended to invest money mostly in groundwork communications methods in the beginning phase because it is needed to create the firm's image and attain new customers. A special attention should be paid to online communications as this method is comparatively cheap while allows to reach many interest groups. There can be published advertisements in professional magazines and newspapers in order to increase brand awareness. However, this approach is advisable to apply once there are more resources in the company. Also, search engine machine method can be added to the marketing communications plan but in a year or two after main groundwork communications have were carried out.

If the groundwork communications methods are ably executed, the company's trustworthiness will start to grow. Moreover, groundwork communications highly affect sales communications which eventually lead to the purchasing process. It is advised to apply various approaches of sales communications too since their combination may contribute to more closed deals.

Before the marketing communications plan execution, the case company should once again identify and assume the effectiveness of all the marketing communications methods and how they match each other. Later on, it is important to make a follow-up in order to recognize and analyse all the results of the marketing communications plan. In this case the next marketing communications strategy will be much easier to create and implement.

7.1 Quality of the research

The study was based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews. In the researcher's opinion, all the contents of the report are pretty much understandable and easy to read since it provides a lot of information given by the interviewees.

Each step of the research process was followed in a logical way while a clear sequence was adhered during the whole procedure.

As for credibility of the study, it is needed to mention that the researcher is Russian who is aware of this topic in a certain way since there is the whole understanding of the consumers' perception concerning sauna industry. Besides that, the data collected is supposed to be relevant enough as it is possible to relate the interviewees' opinion with the researcher's one.

The limitation of the study is referred to the fact that the interviewees could hide some facts since they might not want to reveal some additional information to the public research. Such a limitation is very important since it covers the companies' operations and protects them from the competitors' observation. However, it does not affect that much the final results of the study. Consequently, this research can be claimed reliable and can be used for further research on this topic.

7.2 Subject for further study

Due to the fact that the research information was gained on the basis of just interviews, there is certainly a need for further study.

It is recommended to analyse the ongoing situation once the company attains some customers. In this case Karava Sauna Ltd will be able to distinguish the potential customers as well as find out opinions on certain topics from their current prospects.

Also there can be conducted the analysis of Russian market. It should include such sections as average prices, business climate, PEST analysis and etc. Market analysis will indicate the market situation from different points of view which might favour further company's decisions.

8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The researcher believes that the study was conducted very thoroughly and the outcomes have met the research problem and its questions. As far as the researcher was interested in the marketing field, it was very engaging to conduct the study because there was a lot of additional information which was contributing to broaden the knowledge.

There had been invested a lot of efforts for conducting the study since business-to-marketing was unfamiliar to the researcher. However, the use of many different resources has supported the process while providing a lot of data. The researcher believes that the current study will be very useful and beneficial and will deliver additional value to the case company.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Interview framework

1. Who is responsible for buyer decision in the buyer organisation?
2. How is the buying process happening?
3. What factors affect the buying decision?
4. What product features are the most important ones for customers?
5. Do you have more organisational customers or end-users?
6. How often do you maintain a contact with a customer after the purchase?
7. What are the most effective marketing communications methods when making a first contact?
8. When is the best time for starting a first contact? (season, day of the week, time of the day)
9. Do you think that interest to saunas will increase in future?
10. How often do you read magazines or press releases about your field of business?
11. Who is responsible for marketing communications in a company?
12. How often do you receive an inquiry through the company's website?